

The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, December 3. 1692. Licens'd, E. B.

All the Paper of Questions that have been sent unto us about Dr. Burnet's *Archologia*, &c. are not needful for us to Answer, some of 'em relating to what is purely an Innocent Hypothesis, and as such we are willing to acknowledge, that there's a deal of Reading, pretty Invention, sharp Wit, and refin'd Philosophy mingled throughout, and as such the Age is willing to receive it: But all these Qualifications want foundation to make the whole Canonical, or fix a Standard for every Readers Judgment. As for other parts, which are rais'd upon the Ruines of Eternal Reason and Religion, and built upon a Contempt (accidentally so at least) and a wresting of the Scripture, there we think our selves oblig'd to express our Concern, and if possible, in such Terms as may at once expose the Errors thereof, and secure the Judgment of some Persons, who otherwise might be prejudic'd with that *Air of Wit and Reading* they will find there, or at least with the Authority of the Author himself. As to the Questions of the first Book, we shall pass 'em over without any Remark, but that in General 'tis a very useful elaborate Treasury of Ancient Philosophy. Therefore to the Questions of the Second.

Quest. 1. **W**Hether there's any Exceptions to be made against the first Chapter of the second Book?

Ans. The first part of it is of great use against such as would argue for the Eternity of the World, as did Aristotle, and a few more in all Ages; for after the Testimony of Moses, he summs up several of the Phœnicians, Grecians, Latins, &c. who generally agreed, *That all things emerg'd from a Chaotick Night*. But then he's unwilling to believe this was done on the sudden, but that there being a great Strife, Disorder, and Confusion of things, there was need of a very considerable time to settle them in, being loth to recede from the same Position he laid down before in his Theory; which because the Dr. finds to be inconsistent with Moses's Narration, therefore (as will appear by and by) he calls in question his Authority, endeavouring to prove the Historical part of the Creation a kind of Parable, not considering, that tho' it shou'd be to granted, (which we shall never be willing to do) yet the 4th. Commandment, which is of too great a Moment than to have a Parabolical signification, is express, *That in six days God created the Heaven and Earth*, &c. whereas the Drs. Earthy particles, and liquid Mass must be many years (if at all) in settling to a Consistence.

Quest. 2. *Whether as the Dr. has said in his 2d. Chapter, he has already prov'd by Physical Reasons in his Theory, that the Earth was of a smooth and even Surface, free from Seas, Rocks, Mountains, &c. as also, whether that which he offers further in the same Chapter, as to a threefold State of the World, be consistent with the Authority of St. Paul, St. Peter, which he makes use of, especially the last, as the great Pillar on which he supports the whole Notion?*

Ans. His Physical Reasons (as he is pleas'd to call them) are founded upon his Hypothesis, thus, *The Chaos was fluid and confus'dly blended together, the grosser parts subsided, constituting an Interior Orb of Earth, the rest of the Matter was divided into liquid and volatile, the liquid containing in it all the Original Liquors of that Earth, which it encircled, and the unctuous oily Matter mounted above that, and when the Air purg'd it self of its gross Earthy particles, of which it was full, they fell down and mingled with the Oily Liquor, which growing thicker and thicker, by accession of more Terrestrial particles, by degrees grew stiff and firm, and settled into the Consistency of an habitable Earth*. Hence he concludes, that the Earths settling from a smooth Liquid,

it's impossible there shou'd be Mountains, Seas, Rocks, in it before the Flood. This Narration is the Substance of the Drs. Hypothesis, which he takes all for granted, before he makes his Conclusion, which he calls a *proof from Physical Reasons*. It would be easie to show, how unphilosophical this Hypothesis is in all its parts, particularly in that Material one of the Earthy particles getting first into the Air, or being numerous enough to stiffen so much Liquidity; or lastly, of growing dry in any definite Number of Years, much less in six days, which is the express time that God Almighty himself attested in the Mount, when he gave the Law, as well as in other places of Scripture.

As for the latter part of the Question, Whether the Authority fetcht from the Apostles, St. Peter, and St. Paul, give the Dr. any ground to build these Notions upon, we shall now consider, his Thesis is *Terram fuisse*, &c. "That the Earth was in its Antideluvian State of another Form, different from what it is now, as also the Heaven of another Position. First let us see what St. Peter says, *Αυτῶναι ἡ αὐτὴ τὴν δόξαν, &c.* For they (to wit, the Scoffers that question'd the Second Coming of Christ) are willingly ignorant of this, that by the Word of God the Heavens were of old, and the Earth standing out of the Water, and in the Water, by which the then World perish'd, being overflow'd with water; and the now Heavens and Earth are by the same word kept in Store, reserved unto Fire against the day of Judgment, and Perdition of ungodly Men. We will endeavour to do the Dr. Justice, in Abstracting his Exposition of this place, since he says, p. 225. *Supra hanc petram Theoriam Telluris*, &c. that he has chiefly built his *THEORY OF THE EARTH* upon this Pillar or Passage of St. Peter: As also upon a parallel passage of St. Paul, which because tending to the same thing, (tho' in different Chapters) we shall consider 'em together, and be a little larger here, tho' we contract our Discourse in the rest.

The Drs. Exposition. *These Scoffers question a future destruction, or change of this Natural World, their Education and Faith teaching no such Doctrine for a long long succession of years: But they are willingly ignorant of the first State of Nature, which by its Constitution was destroy'd by a Deluge, but the Heavens and Earth which are now, having a different Constitution, shall be destroy'd by Fire.*

Ans. The Phrase *NATURAL WORLD* in the Exposition, is strain'd and unnatural, the Apostles design being not to build a Theory of the Earth, but to show the parallel between the unexpected Judgment upon the other World of the Ungodly, and the sudden Coming of Christ upon the now World of Scoffers, the first by a Deluge, the last by a General Conflagration. We are willing to grant, that the World before the Flood might receive a considerable change by the Deluge, as many small Rivers made, some Mountains cast up, &c. but that it receiv'd no such change as a total inversion, by breaking into pieces, and losing its first situation, is the Matter we deny, and what the Dr. would prove; but this we shall come to in answering his 5 Reasons for his Opinion.

To prove the foregoing Exposition, he adds the 5 following Arguments:

1. *If the Face of Nature is yet the same, when (the ὡς ἐμπροσθεν) the Scoffers had what they contended for, which is not to be granted.*

Ans. It would be true, if the Apostles words, *All things continue as they were from the Creation of the World*, can be so limited, to mean, *That this Visible State of Nature was never yet wholly alter'd in its Constitution from the Creation of the World*; (as in the Theory) for that's the Point the Dr. contends for, and he must make

these



these of *antiquari*, these Scoffers deny this very thing, or his Inference is false: There's no body but must see the Fallacy.

2. *The Jews were not ignorant that there was a Deluge, and were not blam'd therefore, but because they were (or seem'd) ignorant that the Antediluvian Heavens and Earth had a different Constitution from what they have now.*

Ans. They could not be blam'd by the Apostle for being ignorant of what was never taught in the World before, viz. That there was such a thorow Change and Destruction of the first State of Nature, as the Theory supposes. If the Dr. will bring the Opinion of the Ancient or Modern Jews to confirm his, we'll be his Disciples.

3. *The 5th. Verse which is brought here to show the Mutability of Nature, would without the above Exposition be to no purpose.*

Ans. Yes, to sufficient purpose, if the whole World of Men was destroy'd, if the whole System of Nature was for the present as it were converted into one Element; if the Face of the Earth, (which we'll grant much more even and beautiful than now) was upon the decrease of the Waters all cover'd with Corps and Mud, Trees torn up by the roots, the Channels of Rivers turn'd another way, Cities demolisht, and Nature in general made desolate, and no hopes of reparation but the poor remains of Mortality that was shut up in the Ark, to begin and replenish the World anew: If all this be truth, and much more of the same Nature, then the Apostle's Argument which is suppos'd in the 5th. Verse, is not in vain.

4. *The Consequence in the 6th. Verse would be without due Premises.*

Ans. The Consequence is very just without the Dr's fence, which relies very much upon a Natural Cause, calling *Δι' αὐτὴν*, *Constitutionem vel situm terræ*; leaving out *Verbum Dei*, which nevertheless will come in for the greatest share in that heavy Judgment, and spoil all the Philosophy in the Case. The Natural Inference is thus, *By the Word of God the Heavens were of old, and the Earth standing in the Water and out of the Water, by which Word and Situation the World of ungodly Men perished in the Waters, and the face of Nature was made desolate, and strangely alter'd, as in the last Answer.*

5. *There's an Antichesis in the 7th. Verse, the Heavens and Earth before the Flood are distinguish'd from those that are now.*

Ans. The Antichesis is very genuine in the 7th. Verse as to the Appellation of *new* and *old*, in respect both of *Earth* and *Heavens*, before and after the Flood. First, as to the *Earth*, it is very properly called the old World in respect to this, in relation to its self, as coming almost out of its Chaos again, as we describ'd in *Ans.* 3. but more especially to Noah's small Family, who were to begin the World again, both as to Peopling, Building, &c. And as for the *Heavens*, it must be either understood of those below the Moon or those above it; not the last, for then the Moon it self had been destroyed: So that we can only reasonably believe it to be the Clouds, Atmosphere, and the Air, which might be transelemented and changed into Water (and might therefore be said to be destroy'd, as not being the same) and after they had done their fatal office, they might either naturally be rarify'd again as Vapours are, or might by their Creator's fiat be at once chang'd to their first Nature and Office.

And to show the Improbability of any other Change of the Heavens and Earth by the Deluge, let us compare this Passage of St. Peter with others; first with another of his own, 2 Pet. 2. 5. Gen. 6. 7. idem 13. *with the Earth*, in the Original *from the Earth*. Gen. 7. 4. *id.* 21, &c. where all the places that mention this Deluge speak only of *destroying all living Creatures from off the face of the Earth*, but not the Earth it self.

Lastly, It won't be amiss to Note how this Passage of St. Peter spoils the whole Hypothesis, at once affirming that the *Earth stood in the Water and out of the Water*, which is exactly contrary to the Hypothesis, so that either the Dr. must quit the *Pillar of his Theory*, and seek a new one, or bury his Theory under so proper a Monument.

We shall also remark that this *threefold State of Nature* which the Dr. would have St. Paul to hint at in the 8th. of the *Romans*, falls very unluckily for his purpose, two of 'em being before the Flood, when he would have his second begin; but that only by the by.

Quest. 3. *Whether the Cause that the Dr. assigns for the Universal Deluge, be agreeable to his own Theory?*

Ans. Yes, agreeable enough, and very pretty for an Hypothesis, only we must lay Scripture by if we believe one tittle of it: Our Author would have it a *Tebhom-Rabbah*, *An Eruption of Waters out of the Vomb of the Earth*: St. Peter calls it a *Flood*; and Moses gives you the time and degrees of its Increase and Decrease.

Quest. 4. *What think you of the 5th. and 6th. Chapter, which mention the right and oblique Position of the Earth to the Sun, with their Properties and Phenomena's consequent upon such a Change?*

Ans. We have not room to consider this at present; besides, here being nothing against Scripture, we shall pass it over, according to our Promise at the beginning.

In our next *Mercury* we shall prove that the Place of the Garden of *Eden* may be assign'd very near, as also that the four *Rivers* which come from it, at this day are certainly known, which will further shew the Earth did not fall in that Destruction the Dr. pretends. We shall also examine his Opinions about the Historical part of the *Creation*, which he has endeavour'd to prove an Allegory: And lastly we shall essay to clear those *Absurdities* he has fastened upon *Moses*.

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